



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240

JAN 21 2005



To: State Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Secretary, Department of Natural Resources of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
Governor of Guam
Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands
Governor of American Samoa
Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Mayor of the District of Columbia

In anticipation of upcoming Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) Request for Proposals, the Service would like to share with you supplemental information regarding program improvements and awarding of funds. Specifically, the purpose of this correspondence is to: (1) announce the changes in Tier-2 criteria; (2) clarify what the Fish and Wildlife service expects in a Tier-1 proposal; (3) discuss the definition of species-at-risk; and (4) notify you of the intended timeline for proposals.

Earlier this year, we invited comments from the States regarding proposal ranking criteria the Service uses in evaluating Tier-2 grants for LIP. Based on these comments and our experience operating this program for three years, we made some changes to the attached *LIP Final Program Guidelines (FY 2005)*. Also, we have included a copy of the *Grant Proposal National Review Team Sub-criteria Guidance* which should assist you in addressing each ranking criteria. It is our hope that these changes will provide greater clarity to the selection criteria and improve the overall fairness of the approval process.

We intend to award funding to Tier-1 proposals again this year. States must meet the eligibility requirements for Tier-1 grants as presented in the LIP Implementation Guidelines. To provide further guidance, we have attached a copy of *LIP Tier 1 Eligibility Requirement Expectations* that describes the information that must be included in the applications. We suggest you address these six eligibility requirements individually as a subheading within the *Approach* or *Procedures* section of the narrative. We expect Tier 1 proposal narratives to have no more than 10 pages.

In order to successfully respond to the program criteria, the State must have a list of their species at risk. Developing a list of species at risk is the State's responsibility. In preparing your list, you should consider federally listed endangered, threatened, or candidate species; species listed under NatureServe as critically imperiled (G1), imperiled (G2), or vulnerable (G3); or species listed by a State agency as endangered, threatened, of special concern; or others with justification. You should describe the process used to develop your State's list and how you will alter it over time. Keep in mind, Congress intended for this program to help with "delisting" (i.e., species recovery) and in preventing other species in decline from being "federally listed." While species that are currently hunted or fished in your State are not excluded from being designated species-at-risk, you should describe your rationale for including harvested species on the at-risk list to assist in the ranking/evaluation process.

This year, the funding available for LIP Tier-2 grants is reduced from approximately \$27 million in 2004 to \$20 million and it may therefore be necessary to consider partial funding of some proposals. You are encouraged to draft your proposals with this possibility in mind, to ensure that viable conservation programs can be conducted if less than full funding is available.

The anticipated schedule for FY 2005 LIP program consists of placing a 60-day Request for Proposals in the Federal Register in February and a posting on grants.gov. We will ask the States to submit hard copies of their complete Tier-1 and Tier-2 proposals to their respective Federal Assistance (Federal Aid) Regional Offices. States will also be asked to submit their Tier-2 proposals in electronic format (Word, WordPerfect, or pdf files) to the Washington Office. The Washington Office will distribute electronic copies of Tier-2 proposals to the LIP National Review Team. The Regional Offices will select Tier-1 proposals for award recommendations. Within 30 days after the proposal submission deadline, the Review Team will meet and select Tier-2 proposals for award recommendations to the Service Director and Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

While all States are eligible to submit proposals, we encourage States that did not receive Tier-2 funding during the last cycle or never have received Tier-2 funding to submit proposals for FY 2005. We request that States that received funding in FY 2004 to base their funding requests on their need for and ability to use additional LIP funds in the near term.

We hope this information has been helpful to you. If you have any questions, please contact your Regional Federal Assistance Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Williams" clearly distinguishable.

DIRECTOR

Attachment
